

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES

June 3, 2010

Members Present: Daniel Clapp, Joan Golowich, Joel Gordon, Rosemary Kofler, Kathy Koplow,

Absent: Doris Holden, Mary Jane Laus, Barbara Sutherland, Juana Trujillo

Select Board Liaison: Stephanie O'Keeffe

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Karen Erman (Administrative Assistant)

Guests: Larry Shaffer (Town Manager), Barbara Slovin (President of the Friends of the Amherst SC); Diana Stein (Select Board); Kay Zlogar

Joan Logan, Lillian Scott, Richard Kofler, Alan Root, Judith Fish, Warren Bechtold, Elaine Fligman, Marie Cleary

Scott Merzbach (Gazette Reporter)

Welcome: Dan Clapp, Chair, called the Council on Aging meeting to order at 9:05 AM. He announced that Stephanie O'Keeffe is the official Select Board liaison to the COA. Kathy Koplow has completed her role as Manager of the Clarke House. She will continue to serve on the COA.

Minutes of Previous Meeting: The minutes of the May 6, 2010 meeting were approved and accepted.

Friends' Treasurer Report:

Barbara Slovin reported for Doris. There is \$14,088.77 in the checking account and \$74,841.32 in the investment account.

Friends Update:

Barbara Slovin. The First Annual Amherst Follies was a lot of work and a major learning experience. The amount raised was \$3,508.51. Planning for the Second Annual Follies will begin in September. The Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Amherst Senior Center will be held Monday, June 21, at 1:00 PM. All who have donated to the Friends during the year are members. At the June 21 meeting the slate of Board members will be presented and voted on. There is one Board position open and they are seeking someone for the position of Treasurer.

Conversation with Larry:

Larry thanked the Friends, Nancy and the Senior Center for the successful Follies he attended, reminding everyone that the 'first' of any major event always starts out modestly in raising funds. It was a wonderful event and will hopefully be a great and long tradition.

"Relative to the efforts to consolidate various functions and activities here at the Bangs Center, I was very pleased to receive a draft report yesterday from our three department heads and Kay Zlogar. I thought the report was an excellent report. I thought it was a great, great first start so I am enthusiastically endorsing it. I have asked Julie, Nancy, Linda and Kay to proceed and finalize the draft and to begin the implementation. Fundamentally, the plan draws out a number of goals and objectives all of which are consistent with the discussion we have been undertaking relative to achieving efficiency and effectiveness." It spells out some opportunities for consolidation on the clerical end and some consolidation in office suites. It employs the use of the senior reception area to provide reception for both the Health Department and the Senior Center. "The report embodies exactly the kind of values that I hoped to stimulate amongst the three department heads. I think we have made great progress and I look forward to this being an initial step towards further efforts toward efficiency and effectiveness."

Nancy said the process began with meetings over several months, chaired by Kay Zlogar. They looked for ways to design Bangs to maximize efficiency. One plan involved redesigning the lobby extensively. The department heads recently drew up another plan with the following highlights: (a handout was provided)

- It would not involve any expense to the Town.

- It would move Ren and Pam from the Health Department suite into the Senior Center suite. Ren, who works part-time in Cambodian Outreach, works mainly with the elderly Cambodian population. She would be able to work more closely with Maura, the Social Worker for elders. Karen, the SC

Administrative Assistant, and Pam, the HD Administrative Assistant, would work closely and could share certain responsibilities such as payroll, turnovers, and scheduling.

- It would allow us to continue to utilize the 'free' volunteer help in reception. With further training they would handle HD work.

- It would open up the Senior Center reception and waiting area to those who are waiting to see someone in the Health Department. No such area is available now for the HD.

- If there is money to be spent, it could be used to refurbish, refurnish and paint the needy areas.

- LSSE would stay downstairs but all three departments will work together on special projects such as a Health and Safety Fair in the fall and the Southpoint Family Fun Day in June. Maura Plante, the only Social Worker in Town, could also be of assistance with some LSSE family issues.

Kay Zlogar said, "This is a great first step. One of the major goals was to consolidate customer service. This meets the first steps of that goal very well."

Nancy added that all three department heads heartily endorse the electronic signage system planned by Larry and IT. It is to be installed this summer.

Dan referred to a 2005 recommendation "to explore moving from direct service provider to assurance that services are being provided in the community". He asked if the philosophy behind this was to get all social services out of Town government and onto outside private agencies.

Larry said that fundamentally, over the last three budgets, the Town is moving from providing direct social services to trying to locate 501c3 agencies (private, not-for-profit corporations) that do similar work. Those agencies and services would be supported outside of the Town portfolio. There are times that won't be possible, in which case the Town will provide the services. We are not rigid and do not want to rid our Town of those services.

Dan asked how the Select Board felt about moving social services agencies out of the Town government onto outside groups.

Stephanie said there is no general policy. The SB has been supportive of Larry in trying to identify areas where funding can be found outside of the General Fund. The term social service covers many services, including the schools and public safety. Clearly those will not be moved out of the Town portfolio and the SB has spoken strongly in support of senior services.

Alan Root spoke. He feels the department heads' plan with core clerical services is more than a first step.

Alan is involved with other users of the SC in an effort to query seniors about what they want for services in the future. Alan and others will meet tomorrow to develop a 5-year questionnaire. They hope to come up with questions that will stimulate seniors to respond to the questionnaire with their own personal suggestions. Responses will be anonymous. Alan sees his questionnaire as an extension of the 2010 Survey that was recently done. He invited all seniors to attend the meeting on June 4 from 1-3 PM.

Nancy said that the product Alan produces would be brought before the COA before it is put in the newsletter.

Dan added that since one of Larry's stated goals is transparency and openness, the COA is pleased to have seniors make recommendations and values their participation in helping to provide ideas to meet the goal of improved efficiency and effectiveness while minimizing cost.

Larry has contracted with a survey agency (World APP) about measuring employee morale. The process must be scientific to be valid. An employee morale survey has been prepared, it has the Town signature, it is being evaluated, and then it will go on the web page where employees can respond to it. "The questions must be valid and must get to the answers you are looking to achieve." Following the first survey about employee morale, there will be a survey on customer service.

Joel commented about the use of language, finding the term 'customer service' distressing in reference to seniors. The term 'customer service' conveys the way a department store or business tries to analyze how it can best function. The ways of functioning are not the same for the senior center or other human service agencies. As we look for efficiencies we need to look at the how the language we use may condition the course we follow.

Dan agreed and said we do not want to become 'mechanistic' or have a 'one-size-fits-all' plan. It is important that we provide service in a meaningful, cordial way.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Cambodian Outreach Update:

Nancy said that Ren will not transition to the Senior Center but will remain as part of the Health Department in order to be eligible for an additional grant. Her office will however be moved to the SC suite.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE**Ad Hoc Survey Committee:**

Rosemary reported. The committee met on May 24 to discuss "Where do we go from here". We agreed it would be valuable to have the 2010 Survey report and results more widely dispersed in the community in a variety of ways – a presentation to the Select Board; a presentation to Town Meeting; on ACTV. The survey on the Town website should be reformatted to make it more engaging and readable by presenting first an Executive Summary and the Key Points followed by the body of the academic product.

Some ideas for ACTV included programming several episodes. The first could be a discussion with Randall Stokes, the Study Director, and several committee members. Each succeeding episode could focus on different topics based on the Key Points, such as care giving and Adult Day Care, the desire for fitness equipment, and boomers being fearful of the future.

Anyone interested in joining a sub-committee to determine how to plan for the future based on survey results should contact Nancy.

Alan suggested a continuing presence on ACTV for seniors. Mary Jane could be helpful in that respect because of her connection with ACTV.

SHAG (Senior Health Advisory Group):

Dan reported. The meeting today dealt with a program that Dr. Ellie Vanetizian developed for the self-management of your own care. Also discussed was a book about to be published by Sara Wolff about growing older. It is about her experience in her background of psychology and also relates to gerontology and the care of elders. It relates to the Senior Health Clinic run by Lisa White, RN, here at Bangs and how our clinic could be a blueprint for similar health clinics in other areas. Sara would like to have a presentation of her book at Bangs. She would give a portion of the proceeds to the Friends.

Highland Valley Elder Services:

Joan said the topic for the next meeting would be "Requests for Proposals".

Maura said that HVES receives Title 3 money from the federal government. They approach agencies in the community to apply for seed money to start programs that can benefit elders. They look for collaboration between agencies and sustainable programs, since the funding only lasts for three years. Maura received such a grant for working with Kathy and Juana in the 'building community' program.

Changes Sub-Committee:

Information was previously discussed under the department heads' plan. We are excited about the new proposal submitted by the department heads.

Nominating Committee:

Nancy said that two terms expire. Doris and Rosemary agreed to serve and need to be reappointed by Larry. Previously Larry assured Nancy that a board member could serve more than two terms even though the by-laws recommend a hiatus of one year after completion of the second term.

Next month will be the selection of officers. They serve a one-year term. The COA no longer has a Treasurer. The Friends hold that position. Doris would like to step down as Treasurer of the Friends.

Stephanie said there had been a defacto policy in Town that there was the expectation that a second term would be automatic and that the second of two terms would be the end of serving. The SB discussed that policy and did away with it. There is no such thing as an automatic reappointment after a first term nor is there an automatic dismissal after the second term. The goal is for the appointing authority to have the ability to fill the seats as they best see fit.

New Floor Needed in the Bubble Room for Senior Health Services:

Nancy explained that the current carpeting in the Bubble Room is unsanitary because of toenail clippings taking place in that room. Nurses Julie and Lisa recommend replacing the carpet with flooring

that could be cleaned better. Maintenance estimates the cost of that project would be \$1340.00. The Friends agreed to pay for that if the COA would endorse that improvement.

Joan pointed out that that is a capital expense and it is not a direct service to the seniors.

Nancy said the Friends have paid for many such capital improvements in the past, not wishing to place an extra burden on the Town budget. Only the SC uses that room.

Stephanie said there is a Town Capital Planning process. The SC should let the Town Manager know when we want any change to the building. There is no doubt the Town would have paid for the project this year had it come through the capital requests in the spring since health and safety is one of the highest priorities and this is a small amount of money. It may be too late for this year but could be considered for next year. Changing anything in a Town building must be part of a larger Town plan since that building may be used for some other purpose in the future. Stephanie advised checking with the Town on the proposed Bubble Room project.

Nancy will look into the Capital Planning process. The SC has never asked for any capital improvement money.

Rosemary made a motion:

The COA supports the Friends decision to spend \$1340.00 to replace the floor in the Bubble Room, pending the outcome of the discussion with the Town government.

It was unanimously supported.

Initial Thoughts about Purchasing a Small Van:

Nancy said the SC needs a small van that can seat 6-8 people with a door on both sides. It would be used for a variety of things -- for the HVES Nutrition site group; for staff running errands for SC purposes; to take seniors to activities; for emergency rides for seniors.

STAFF REPORTS

Hearing Aid Repair, Enhanced Fitness Ending:

Nancy announced that because of the economy, **Avada Hearing** would no longer be sending Walter to Bangs. Seniors will have to see him at the Hadley office.

The **Enhanced Fitness** program has ended. James Fitzgerald might put together his own program for seniors at Bangs in the fall.

The COA meeting adjourned at 10:38 AM.

The next meeting of the COA will be held on July 1, 2010 at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Rosemary Kofler, Secretary

The approved minutes of the May 6, 2010 meeting were delivered to the Select Board Office to be filed.